

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، الحمد لله رب العالمين، وصلي الله وسلم وبارك على نبينا وسيدنا محمد، وعلى آله واصحابه أجمعين، أما بعد؛ فقال النبي صلي الله عليه وسلم، إن بني إسرائيل افترقت على اثنتين وسبعين فرقة وتفترق أمتي على ثلاث وسبعين ملة، كلهم في النار إلا ملة واحدة قالوا ومن هي يا رسول الله ؟ قال ما أنا عليه وأصحابي. رواه الترمذي.

The Prophet ﷺ said: The Children of Israel were divided into 72 sects, and my Ummah shall split up into 73 sects, all of which, save one, will go to Jahannam. The Sahaabaah رضي الله عنهم asked, “Which group is that?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “(It is that group which follows the path upon) which I and my Sahaabaah رضي الله عنهم are on.”

Narrated by Imaam al-Tirmidhi

The Prophet ﷺ in the above mentioned Hadith has predicted the division of this Ummah into 73 sects, each of which is destined for Jahannam save one. And further on He ﷺ also goes on to identify the one group which would not deviate like the rest.

As can be seen the Ummah, both past and present has split into many sects, each claiming that it is on the right path, yet as is learnt from the Hadith, only one of these will actually be on the right path, the answer to this however is found in the Hadith itself, in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ identified the faithful and upright people through the words, “ما أنا عليه وأصحابي (It is that group which follows the path upon) which I and my Sahaabaah رضي الله عنهم are on.”

What is learnt from this is that the distinguishing and salient feature of those people who will attain salvation is adherence to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and of the Sahaabaah رضي الله عنهم. Having understood that adherence to the Sunnah and affiliation to the Jama’ah (group) of Sahaabaah رضي الله عنهم is the key to success, it is important to define these words and to know what they actually mean.

Definition of Sunnah

The definition of Sunnah is:

قول الرسول ﷺ وفعله وتقريره

The statement of the Messenger ﷺ, his practice and his verification.

Sunnah is made up therefore of the verbal sayings of the Messenger ﷺ, his practices, and his verifications, this is when He ﷺ did not object to something upon observing someone carrying it out, but remained silent. His silence has been equalled to his explicit approval, as it cannot be expected of him to remain silent at things disapproved by the Shariah.

Definition of Jama’ah

Jama’ah means ‘group’, and refers to the Sahaabaah رضي الله عنهم, the direct students of the Messenger ﷺ, thus the most capable and worthy of interpreting His noble sayings. It was they who observed the Prophet ﷺ first hand, and were fully aware of the context of his statements, they were the direct addressees of the Qura’an and direct recipients of the Ahadeeth. It is then logical and wise to rely on their interpretations and give preference to their explanations over ours.

Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah

As can be understood from above, those people who follow both the Sunnah, and the way of the Sahaabaah رضي الله عنهم are called ahl al-sunnah wal-jama'ah. By leaving either the Sunnah, or the way of the Sahaabaah one falls out of being part of this group, both are necessary.

Based on and adapted from '*Sunnah and the People of Sunnah*' by Shaykh al-Hadith Hadhrat Mawlana Muhammad Saleem Dhorat hafizahullah.

The Roots and Branches of Islaam

Islaam is made up of what we call usool and furoo'. Usool literally means roots and furoo' means branches. Usool refers to the core beliefs of Islaam, such as the belief of life after death, that there is Jannah and Jahannam etc, and furoo' refers to practises, for example how to perform wudhu, how to perform salaah and so on. The Hadith which is quoted '*The differing of opinions of my ummah is a blessing*' refers to **Ikhtilaaf within furoo' and not usool**, which is why we have many different and established ways in terms of practice, namely the four madhaahib, the Hanafis (followers of Imaam Abu Hanifah رحمه الله in fiqh), Maalikis (followers of Imaam Maalik رحمه الله in fiqh), Shaafies (followers of Imaam al-Shaafi رحمه الله in fiqh), and Hanbalis (followers of Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal رحمه الله in fiqh). This ikhtilaaf is completely fine, and permissible, and is a form of blessing. This differing is also not sectarian, meaning that Hanafis are not one sect, and Shaafies one sect, but all are part of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah.

What takes a person or a group out of Islaam or the fold of ahl al-sunnah wal-jama'ah?

As mentioned above Islaam is made up of usool and furoo'. Usool can either be established through evidences (Verses of the Qura'an and Ahaadeeth of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ) which are clear cut in meaning, or those evidences which are ambiguous and thus open to interpretation.

If someone rejects something which is established through evidence which is clear in meaning, and free from ambiguity then that person will fall out of Islaam completely, although they may still call themselves Muslim. An example of such a group in recent times is the *Qadyaanis*, who believe that there was a Prophet after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, this goes against the verse,

ما كان محمد اباً احد من رجالكم ولكن رسول الله وخاتم النبيين

*Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and **last of the Prophets**.*

If however there is an Ikhtilaaf in the interpretation of an ambiguous verse or Hadeeth, then we cannot say that the person is out of the fold of Islaam completely, but if it is a severe disagreement then we say that they are out of ahl al-sunnah wal-jama'ah.

Based on '*Aqeedah al-Tahaawiyyah*' of Imaam al-Tahaawi rahimahullah

Barelwiyyah

You mentioned regarding the differences between us and the Barelwis (Balcalava Street). This is taken from what Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Taqi al-Uthamaani wrote as part of an answer to a similar question.

...The first is with regards to the Barelwi group, which is distinct from the majority of Muslims in some points of belief and innovated practices. Among their beliefs is that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) knew the unseen and was cognizant of

everything that was and shall be, and that his noble soul has the right of disposal in terms of benefiting and harming people. Their *imam*, Shaykh Ahmad Rada Khan al-Barelwi circulated a *fatwa* of *kufir* against the '*ulama* of Deoband and even said that he who does not consider them a *kafir* is also a *kafir*. This was because they (the '*ulama* of Deoband) had criticized their beliefs and said: the knowledge of the unseen is a quality of Allah Most High, no one is a partner with him in this. However, He Most High informed His messengers of that which he wished from the unseen. Among their *bid'ah* practices is that they celebrate certain festivals that are not established in the Qur'an and Sunnah and consider them to be preferable, rather they treat them like those actions that are *wajib* by expressing extreme loath for those who do not join them. Likewise, they have contrived certain practices when someone dies such as the family of the dead person inviting people on the third, tenth and fortieth day after the passing of the deceased. Food is prepared for them and he who does not do this is severely reprimanded. And there are many other such innovations.

Discourse regarding this group is plenty. However, that which I have mentioned is a summary of their beliefs and practices. Among them are those who exceed the limit in this, talk nonsense and are bigoted, and those who in comparison to the others are balanced.

Taken from '*Fatawa 'Uthmani (Kitab al-Imaan)*'

As within the Barelwis there is a lot of different views, some go to extremes in their beliefs and some are more moderate, but generally they are considered to be people of innovation. Some scholars consider them to be within ahl al-sunnah wal-jama'ah, others consider them to be out of ahl al-sunnah wal-jama'ah. Really it depends on how deviant they are in beliefs and practices.